

Deuteronomy 3:23 to 7:11 Torah Reading – Parshat VaEtchanan

*English version to be sung to the Torah tropes by Len Fellman*

Latest version July 30, 2020

3:23 I pleaded with YHWH at that time, saying:

24 My Lord E<sup>l</sup>ohim (YHWH), You have begun to show [Your servant] [Your true greatness] and Your hand—Your strong hand; for what god is there in heaven or on earth that can do anything like your works, [or like your powers]?

25 [Let me cross over, I pray], that I may see the land—the good land—there across the Jordan, [the hill country]—[the highlands so good], [over there]; [and also the Lebanon].

26 He was cross, YHWH, with me, on account of you, and He would not listen to me.

Then said YHWH to me, “[That is enough from you!] [Do not continue] speaking [thus to Me]. [Say nothing further] concerning this matter.”

27 [You must climb up] to the top [of the cliff] (the Pisgah), [and lift up] [your eyes and gaze] [toward the west], [and toward the north], toward the south, and toward the east, and see [with your own eyes], for you will not cross this Jordan.

28 Give instructions to Joshua—[make him strong]; give him courage;

for [he will cross over] before this people. [Through him] will be inherited [by them] the land that you will see.”

29 And we stayed in the valley, facing Beth Peor.

4:1 And now, O Israel, hearken to the laws and the regulations: [all of the statutes] [that I myself] am teaching to you to observe, so [that you may live], [and you will enter] and possess the land: [this being the land] [that YHWH], the God of your fathers, is giving to you.

2 You must not [add anything] to the word—the word that I am commanding you, take nothing away from it: [in that you should keep] the mitzvot (commandments) of YHWH your God; this is what I am commanding you.

3 Your eyes have seen [what in fact] was done by YHWH at Baal Peor,

indeed [every man] who did walk after Baal Peor [was destroyed] by YHWH your God from among you.

4 But you who cleave to YHWH your God: [end aliyah] alive are all of you today.

5 [You must be aware] that I [am teaching you] laws and regulations as were commanded to me by YHWH my God, that you [may keep them] in the midst of the land—this being [the land of which] you are going there to possess it.

4:6 [You must safeguard] [and observe them]. Since that is your wisdom and your understanding, in the eyes of the peoples, who, [when they hear them]: namely, all the laws [that I speak of], [they will surely say],  
 “Surely, [a people wise] and discerning is this great nation here.”

7 Indeed, who is a nation so great, which has *Elohim* so near to it, as YHWH our God is, [in all our calling] on Him?

8 And who is a people so great, [a people for whom] there are laws and regulations that are righteous, as is all the Torah we have here? [This it is] [that I myself] am putting before you this day.

9 [However, you must be warned]: Take care [for yourself]—keep watch for your soul exceedingly, lest you forget the things that you saw [with your own eyes], [that they not be lost] from [your heart], all the days of your life.

Make them known to your children, and to your children’s children,

10 [concerning the day] on which you stood before YHWH [*Eloheichem* your God] at Horeb, at which spoke YHWH—[saying to me]:  
 “[Assemble in My presence] the people, and I’ll make them hear My words, so that they will learn to be [in awe of Me] [all their days], indeed [for as long as they] do live on the land. [And to their children], [they will also teach them].

11 You came forward and you stood at the foot of the mountain:  
 [the mountain was seen] [to be burning] with fire, to the heart of the heavens, with darkness, cloud, and dense fog.

12 [At that time there spoke] YHWH [to you] from the midst of the fire.  
 [The sound of the] words you did hear, [but a shape or a form] you did not see; there was only a voice.

13 Then declared God to you His covenant, which [He commanded] to you to observe: the ten [words or commandments], [and he wrote them down] on two tablets of stone.

14 [And as for me]: [I was commanded] by YHWH at that time, that I [should teach you] statutes and laws, so that you [will keep them] [in the land] of which [you are about] to cross over to it, to possess it.

15 But you must watch greatly, for your souls,  
 since [you did not] see any form [on the day] [on which spoke] YHWH [unto you] at Horeb in the midst of the fire.

16 [Do not act destructively] by making [for yourselves] [a carved image] of any likeness—the form of a man or of a woman,  
 17 [a form indeed] of any beast that is on the earth, the form of any bird with wings that flies in the heavens,

4:18 [or the form] [of whatever crawls] on the ground, the form of any fish in the waters, beneath the earth,  
 19 lest you lift your eyes [unto the heavens], [and you gaze upon] the sun and the moon [as well as the stars]—  
 all the array of the heavens—[and you are seduced] into bowing down to them, and serving them,  
 since they were apportioned by YHWH your God, [Who gave them] to all of the peoples that are beneath the heavens.  
 20 But you were taken by YHWH [at the time] [God brought you out] from the furnace of iron—from Egypt,  
 [in order to] [become for Him] the people of his inheritance, as you are this day.  
 21 And YHWH was angry with me [on account of of your words], [and so He swore]: [he would not let me] cross the Jordan,  
 [and would not let me come] [into the land]—[the goodly land]—the land that YHWH your God is giving to you as an inheritance.  
 22 [Because in fact] I [am going to die] [in this land] here; I will not cross the Jordan.  
 But you will [cross over] [and take possession of] the land—the good land, that is there.  
 23 [But be watchful] [for yourselves] [lest you forget] the covenant of YHWH your God which he has sealed (cut) with you;  
 [lest you should make] for yourselves [a carved image]—a likeness [of any sort], about which you were commanded, by YHWH your God.  
 24 Indeed YHWH your God—a fire all-consuming, He is; a God who is zealous.  
 25 [When you beget] children and your children have children [and you are long established] in the land, [if you grow corrupt]  
 and make [a sculpted image]—a form of any sort, [thus doing] [that which is evil] in the eyes of YHWH your God, [making Him angry],  
 26 [I then call to witness] against you this day the heavens [and the earth]: [you will vanish]—[you will surely perish] quickly  
 from [upon the land] of which you [will soon be crossing] [the river Jordan] [to get to it] to possess it.  
 [You shall not] [prolong your days] [upon it], because you will be laid waste—[utterly destroyed].  
 27 [You will then be scattered] [by YHWH]: [you will be dispersed] [among the nations],  
 [and you will be left] [men few] in number [among the *goyim*] (nations) to which [you will be led] [by YHWH]. [You'll be sent] [here and there].  
 28 [You will worship there] gods [that are made] by the hands of man—  
 [gods of wood] and stone, [gods *that*] [cannot see] [and *that* cannot] hear, gods *that* cannot eat, and *that* cannot smell.  
 29 [And you shall seek] [from that very place] YHWH your God, [and you shall find Him],  
 if [you search for Him] [with all your heart] and with all your soul.

4:30 [When in distress] [you find yourself] [and there befall you] all the things [that we speak of],  
[then at the end] of days [you shall turn back] to YHWH your God, [and you will heed] His voice.

31 [Because it is indeed] [that a God] [Who is merciful] is YHWH your God. (He will not desert you, [nor bring you] to ruin.  
[God will not] forget the covenant of your fathers, the one that He swore to them.

32 For [ask—I pray you]—of the days long past that were [before your time]:  
[from the day] [on which] was created [by *Elohim*] | a human [upon the earth] [from one end of the skies] [to the other end] of the skies.  
[Has *there* ever been] [such a thing] so great [as this one], [or indeed] when was *there* heard something like it?

33 [When was there heard] [by a people] the voice of *Elohim*, [speaking right out] [of the midst of the fire], like what was heard by you,—  
[and they lived]?

34 [Or has it occurred—] [an attempt made] [by any god] [to enter into the world] to take to himself [any people] [from within] [another people],  
[enacting great trials], [with signs and with portents], [and with acts of war], [with a hand] that is firm and with arm outstretched,  
and with terrors so great, [like all of the things] that were done for you [by YHWH] [*Eloheichem* your God] in Egypt, [before your eyes]?

35 It is you [who were shown] [that you would know] that YHWH—He is *ha Elohim* (God). There is none other besides Him.

36 [From *ha shamayim*] (the heavens) He made you hear His voice [to reprove you].  
[Also upon the earth] [He showed you] His fire so awesome, and His words you heard [from the midst of the fire].

37 [It was because] [of the fact] that He loved your fathers that He chose their seed after them,  
[and He brought you out,] [showing His presence,] with His power so great, from *Mitzrayim* (Egypt).

38 [He will drive away] [nations that are] [greater indeed]—[and mightier too]—[than you are], [from before you],  
[to bring you in] [and give unto you] [all of their lands] as an inheritance, as on this day.

39 So realize [therefore today], [and bring it back] [into your heart]  
[the truth that] YHWH—He is *ha Elohim*, in the heavens above [and on the earth] below. There is none other.

40 [And you shall observe] His statutes [and His commands]—  
the ones [that I myself] [command you] [on this day], that it go well [with you] [and with your children] [after you],  
[so that prolonged] will be your days upon the land—the land [that YHWH] [*Eloheichem* your God] [end aliyah] is giving to you, [for all time].

4:41 Then [set apart] by Moses [were three] cities across the Jordan, [toward the rising] of the sun,  
 42 that there might flee to them a manslayer—one who [has killed] his neighbor unawares, [and he, as is known],  
 had no enmity toward him, in previous days. [He may therefore flee] [to one of these towns]—of the cities appointed—and live.  
 4:43 [These cities were Betzer], [that was in the desert]—in the land of the plain, for the Reubenites,  
 and Ramoth in the Gilead for the Gaddites, and Golan in Bashan, for the Manassites.  
 44 Now this is the teaching [that was presented] by Moses before the children of Israel:  
 45 These are the testimonies, the statutes and regulations that were spoken by Moses to the children of Israel [when they came out] from Egypt,  
 46 across the Jordan, [in the valley they were], opposite Beth Peor [which is in the land] of Sichon king of the Amorites,  
 who dwells in Cheshbon, who [was struck down] by Moses and the children of Israel [when they came out] from Egypt.  
 47 They took hold of his land [and also the land] of Og, [king of the Bashan], the two kings of the Amorites who were across the Jordan,  
 [toward the rising] of the sun.  
 48 [The land went from Aro'er] which [is on the bank] [of the Wadi Arnon] as far as Siyon, that is, Hermon,  
 49 and the whole Aravah, across the Jordan to the east, [up to] the Sea of the Aravah [end aliyah] beneath the slopes of the Pisgah.  
  
 5:1 And summoned [Moses all the people]—[all of Israel], and said [this to them]:  
 2 [Listen now], Israel, to the laws and regulations, [the proclamation of which] [I am about] to speak in your hearing today.  
 You [shall learn them] [and be watchful] [to keep them].  
 2 YHWH [Eloheinu our God] made [with us a brit]—a covenant at Horeb.  
 3 Not [with your fathers] was it made by YHWH—the covenant [we speak of],  
 but rather with us—we: [those of us] [who are in fact here] today: all of us alive.  
 4 Face [to face it was] that spoke YHWH [with all of us] on the mountain, in the midst of the fire.  
 5 [It was I in fact] [who stood between] YHWH and you at that time to declare to you the word of YHWH,  
 [because you were] afraid in the face of the fire, and went not up on the mountain, [when God said]:

**Deuteronomy 5:6-18: The Ten Commandments – *ta'amei ha'elyon*** (used for public reading)

The trope has *siluk* at (and only at) the end each of the commandments 2 to 10.

*1<sup>st</sup> commandment – no other gods*

5:6 I am YHWH your God, the One [who brought you out] from the land of Egypt—from a house of slavery.  
7 There will not [be for you] other gods [before My face].

*2<sup>nd</sup> commandment – no graven images*

8 [Do not] [make for yourself] [a carved image]—[indeed any likeness or form] that is found in the skies—  
[either in the heavens above]—[or that is found] on the earth below, or that is found in the waters that lie [beneath the earth].  
9 [Do not bow down] [to these things] and [do not serve them], since [I am indeed] YHWH your God—a God Who is zealous,  
[and I call to account] the sins [of the ancestors] [upon the children] to the third and fourth generation [of those that hate Me],  
10 but showing kindness to thousands: [to those that love me] and that keep my commandments.

*3<sup>rd</sup> commandment – don't take God's name in vain*

11 [You must] [not take up] the name of YHWH your God in vain,  
[for indeed] [he is not] absolved by YHWH—[that person]—who takes God's name in vain.

*4<sup>th</sup> commandment – keep the Sabbath*

12 [You must observe] [the day of the Sabbath]—keeping the Sabbath holy, [just as] [you were in fact commanded] |  
by YHWH, [*Eloheicha* your God].  
13 [For there are six] days [on which you can labor] [and do all] of your work,  
14 but day the seventh [is for you a sabbath] | for YHWH [*Eloheicha* your God]. On it [you must not do] [any sort or manner of work]—  
not you, [your son or your daughter], [your servant or maidservant], [your ox or your donkey], [nor all of your cattle],  
nor your alien who is [within your gates], [in order that] [they may all rest]—your servant and your maidservant, like yourself.  
15 [You will then recall] that a slave [you were indeed] | in [the land of Egypt], [and you were brought out]  
by YHWH your God from there with a hand that is firm and an arm outstretched.  
[Because of this fact] [to you it was commanded] by YHWH your God to observe this day of the Sabbath.

5<sup>th</sup> commandment – honor your father and mother

5:16 Honor your father and your mother just as was commanded by YHWH your God, [for the sake of which] | [will be lengthened] [the span of your days] and so [it will be well] with you upon [the very land] that YHWH your God is giving to you.

6<sup>th</sup> commandment – don't kill

17 [You must not] kill.

7<sup>th</sup> commandment – don't commit adultery

17a (18) [You must not commit] adultery.

8<sup>th</sup> commandment – don't steal

17b (19) [You must not] steal.

9<sup>th</sup> commandment – no false witness

17c (20) Do not testify against your neighbor, as a false witness.

10<sup>th</sup> commandment – don't covet

18 (21) Do not covet the wife of your neighbor, and do not desire the house [of your neighbor], [nor his field], his servant or his maidservant, his ox or his donkey, [end aliyah] [nor anything] that belongs to your neighbor.

19 The words [that we have just heard] [were indeed spoken] by YHWH to the whole assembly, [there on the mountain], in the midst of the fire, the cloud [and thick fog], with a voice full of power—[these words], [and no more], [and God wrote them down] on two tablets of stone, [which He gave] to me.

20 [And it happened] [when you heard] the voice from the midst of the darkness, with the mountain burning with fire, [that you came up] [to me]—all the heads of your tribes, and your elders.

21 [And you said this]: “We clearly [were shown] by YHWH our God His glory and His greatness.

His voice we have heard from the midst of the fire.

Today—this day [we have seen] [that after God speaks]—[Elohim speaking right] [to a human] (adam)—[one can live].

22 But now, why should we die? Since it [will consume us]—a fire as great [as this is].

[If it goes on like this] | [that we should find] [that we continue to hear] the voice of YHWH [Eloheinu our God] any further, [we will die].

23 Indeed, [who is there] [of all that are of mortal flesh] that has heard [the actual voice] of Elohim chayim (the living God), [speaking from out] [of the midst of the fire] [as we did], and lived?”

5:24 [So go up] yourself (Moses) and listen—[hearing it all], whatever is said by YHWH our God. [Whatever it may be] |  
 [that you shall] [speak unto us]: [when you tell us all]—whatever was spoken [by YHWH] [*Eloheinu* our God] [to you]—we will hear it and do it.”  
 25 [This was heard] by YHWH—the voice (or sound: *kol*) [in your words] when you were speaking to me. (Moses)  
 Then said YHWH—[speaking to me], “[I have certainly heard] the voice in the words of this people: the words [that they spoke] to you.  
 [They have done well], in all they have spoken.  
 26 [Who would make it be so], [that there was in them]—in this, their hearts—[they should have it in them] [to be] [in awe of Me],  
 to keep all My commandments, [for all of their days], [in order that] it [would go well with them] and with their children, forever.  
 27 So go, and say this to them, ‘Get yourselves back to your tents.’  
 28 [And as for you]: [Here you must remain], standing [beside Me], and I [shall speak to you]  
 [all that concerns] | [the entire *mitzvah*] (commandment), the laws and the statutes, that you [shall teach them],  
 [and they will keep them] [in the land]—[the very land] [that I Myself] am about to give to them, to possess it.  
 29 Be careful to do [just as] [it was commanded] by YHWH your God to you. You must not stray to the right or to the left.  
 30 [In all the way] that has been commanded [by YHWH] [*Eloheichem* your God] [to you], [you shall go],  
 [so that] [you may live] [and it will be well] with you, [and you shall prolong] your days on the land which you shall possess.”

6:1 Now this [is the commandment], the laws and the regulations [that were] [commanded to me] by YHWH your God, to teach to you,  
 [for you to observe them] [in the land]—the land [that you are about] [to cross into] to possess it,  
 2 so that you may reverence YHWH [*Eloheicha* your God] [and so that you will observe] all the laws [and the regulations]  
 that I myself [am commanding you]—you, your child and your grandchild—all the days of your life, [and so that] may be lengthened your days.  
 3 [You must hearken], O Israel, taking care [to observe them], [in order that] it be [well with you], and that you may multiply greatly,  
 [just as it was] promised by YHWH the God of your fathers [unto you], [that of a land] [end aliyah] flowing with milk and honey.



6:4 Listen, O Israel, YHWH our God, YHWH is One.

5 You shall love YHWH your God with all your heart, with all your soul, [and with all your powers].

6 [And it shall be] that the words [that you are hearing], which [I myself] [am commanding you] today, [shall be upon your heart].

7 [You are to repeat them] to your children, [and are to speak] of them  
in your sitting [in your house] in your walking [on the way], [in your lying down] [and in your rising up].

8 You are to tie them as a sign upon your hand, and they are to be for bands, between your eyes.

9 [You are to write them] on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

10 [And it will be] [when you have been brought] | by YHWH, [*Eloheicha* your God], [into the land]—  
the land [that He did swear] [unto your fathers], [that is, to Abraham], to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give to them:  
[consisting of towns]—great and good cities—that you did not build.

11 You will also have houses filled [with every good thing] that you [did not put there],  
and wells all dug out that you [did not dig], vineyards and olive groves that you [did not plant]. [You will eat] and be satisfied.

12 Take care for yourself [lest you forget] YHWH—

[since He is the one] [who brought you out] from the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

13 YHWH, [this is your God] [whom you must fear]— [Him you must serve]. By His name you must swear.

14 You must not follow [and go after] other gods—[after the gods] of the peoples that are [all around you].

15 Because a God [who is quite jealous] is YHWH your God in your midst;  
[lest there be aroused] [the anger of YHWH] your God [against you], since I [will destroy you] from off the face of the earth.

16 So [do not test] YHWH your God, as you did test Him in Massah.

17 [You shall surely] observe the commandments of YHWH your God, His precepts and His laws, that He has commanded you.

18 [You are to do] what is right and is good in the eyes of YHWH, in order [that it be well] with you:  
[that you may come] and possess the land—[this good land]—that was sworn by YHWH to your ancestors,

19 and drive out all your enemies from before you just as it was promised by YHWH.

6:20 [If you are questioned] [by your child] [in days to come], like this:

“What [are the rituals], the laws and the customs—the ones [that were decreed] by YHWH your God to you?”

21 [You will say] to your child, “[Slaves we were]—slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt.

[But we were brought out] [by YHWH] from Egypt with a mighty hand.

22 God brought—[It was YHWH]—[who brought signs] [and wondrous things]:

things great [and terrible] | [there in Egypt], on Pharaoh and all his household [before our eyes].

23 [We are the ones] [He brought out] from there, in order to [take us] [and give] to us the land—  
the land God promised to our ancestors.

24 We were commanded [by YHWH] to observe all the laws—these *chukim*, [to have awe] of YHWH our God,  
[that it be good] [for us] [for all time], [end aliyah] [keeping us alive] to this very day.

25 To our merit [it will be for us], if we safeguard and observe all these laws—the commandments  
[in the presence of] YHWH our God, just as He has charged us.

7:1 When you are brought by YHWH your God [into the land] of which you will go there to possess it,  
[He will cast out] [many nations] [from before you], [namely the Hittites], the Girgashites and the Amorites, the Canaanites [and the Perizites],  
the Hivites and the Yēbusites—seven nations more numerous and powerful [than you are].

2 [When they are given over] [by YHWH] [*Eloheichem* your God] [before you], [you will strike them down].

[You must utterly] [destroy them]—[put them under the ban]. [You shall not] [seal with them] a covenant, nor show them mercy.

3 Do not intermarry with them. Your daughter [you shall not give] [to his son]. [For your son], you shall not take his daughter,

4 [since he will] [turn your son] [from following Me]. [They will worship] gods that are alien (“strange gods”).

[Then will flare up] [the wrath of YHWH] [against you], [and He will destroy you] speedily.

5 [Rather this] you will do [to them]: their altars [you will smash], [their standing pillars] [break in pieces],

[their sacred trees] (*asherah*) [you will cut down], their carved images you will burn with fire.

7:6 Since a nation [that is consecrated] [you surely are] to YHWH your God.  
 [You are the ones] [that indeed were chosen] | by YHWH [*Eloheicha* your God],  
 to become for Him a people [that is treasured] (*am segulah*) among all the people [that there are] on the face of the earth.  
 7 [It is not that] [you had greater numbers] [than all of the peoples] [that you were embraced\*] [by YHWH]— \*according to Aryeh Kaplan  
 [that God desired you], and [that He chose you], for you are the fewest [of all the peoples].  
 8 [It was because of] the love of YHWH [that He has for you] [and from His keeping] of His oath—  
 the vow [that He did make] to your fathers, [that you were brought out] [by YHWH]—[God took you] with a hand [that was firm],  
 [and redeemed you] from the house of slaves, [from the hand] of Pharaoh king of Egypt.  
 9 [And you shall know] that YHWH your God: He is *ha Elohim*, the God (*El*) Who is faithful, [the one Who preserves]  
 the covenant [with graciousness] [for those that love Him] and that keep His commandments, for a thousand generations,  
 10 [and yet he pays back] [to one who hates Him] to his face, to destroy him.  
 [He does not] delay to him [that hates Him]: to his face, [God pays him back].  
 11 So keep what is commanded: the laws [and the regulations],  
 the ones [that I myself] [hereby command you] [end aliyah] [this day], [so that you will keep them].

### **The Ten Commandments – *ta'amei ha'tachton*** (sung to the written *pasukim*, used for private reading)

Deuteronomy 5:6-18) Cantillation from the Stone Edition Tanach, *Sefer Devarim* p. 441

#### *1st commandment – no other gods*

5:6 I am YHWH your God, [I am the One] [who brought you out] from the land of Egypt— from a house of slavery.  
 7 [There will not] [be for you] other gods [before My face].

#### *2nd commandment – no graven images*

8 Do not make for yourself [a carved image]—[any likeness or form] [that is found] in the heavens above or that is found on the earth, below,  
 or that is found in the waters beneath the earth.  
 9 Do not bow down to these things and do not [serve them], since [I am indeed] YHWH your God—a God Who is zealous,  
 [Who calls to account] the sins of the ancestors [upon the children] to the third and fourth generation [of those that hate Me],  
 10 but showing kindness to thousands: [to those that love me] and that keep my commandments.

*3<sup>rd</sup> commandment – don't take God's name in vain*

5:11 You must [not take up] the name of YHWH your God in vain,  
[for indeed] [he is not] absolved by YHWH—[that person]—who takes God's name in vain.

*4<sup>th</sup> commandment – keep the Sabbath*

12 [You must observe] the day of the Sabbath to keep it holy, just as you were commanded by YHWH your God.

13 [For there are six] days [on which you can labor] and do [all of your work],

14 but day the seventh is a sabbath for YHWH your God. You must not do any work

—not you, [your son or your daughter], [your servant or your maidservant],

your ox or your donkey, [or all of your cattle], or your alien who is [within your gates],

[in order that] [they may all rest]—your servant and your maidservant, like yourself.

15 [Then you will recall] that a slave you were in the land of Egypt, and you were brought out by YHWH your God [from there]

with a hand that is firm and an arm outstretched,

[Because of this fact] [to you it was commanded] by YHWH your God to observe this day of the Sabbath.

*5<sup>th</sup> commandment – honor your father and mother*

16 Honor your father and your mother just as was commanded by YHWH your God, [for the sake of which] |

[will be lengthened] [the span of your days] and so [it will be well] with you upon [the very land] that YHWH your God is giving to you.

*6<sup>th</sup> commandment – don't kill*

17 You must not kill,

*7<sup>th</sup> commandment – don't commit adultery*

17a (18) nor commit adultery.

*8<sup>th</sup> commandment – don't steal*

17b (19) You must not steal,

*9<sup>th</sup> commandment – no false witness*

17c (20) nor speak against your neighbor as a false witness.

*10<sup>th</sup> commandment – don't covet*

18 (21) Do not covet the wife of your neighbor, and do not desire the house [of your neighbor], [nor his field], his servant or his maidservant, his ox or his donkey, [end aliyah] [nor anything] that belongs to your neighbor.

## Len Fellman's English readings with tropes

The purpose of this project is to translate *THE SONG OF THE TORAH* into English.

I work by comparing as many as ten English translations of a *pasuk* and creating a cantillated English sentence that sounds as much as possible like the Hebrew. They follow the Hebrew as closely as possible, word for word and trope by trope. The English language has an amazing flexibility, making it possible to make the English word order match that of the Hebrew quite well, allowing for some “poetic licence”, and some willingness on the part of the listener to be “carried” by the melody more than by the English syntax. The translation needs to sound good when *chanted*, but not necessarily when *spoken or read*.

Unlike most translations, these “transtropilations” are not intended to be a substitute for the Hebrew. On the contrary, they are meant to provide a “window” into the Hebrew text and its musical expression. My ideal listener knows enough Hebrew and has enough interest to follow the Hebrew in a bilingual text while the *leyner* is chanting the English version, to bring the Hebrew text to life, both *verbally* and *musically*. For this purpose I use *exactly* the same tropes in the English as in the Hebrew (almost always on the corresponding English word).

The texts can be used to do **consecutive translation**, i.e. leyning a phrase in Hebrew, followed by the corresponding phrase sung in English. Some of my recordings demonstrate this. I do this frequently when leyning for groups that either know little Hebrew, or that don't have a *chumash* in front of them.

I favor literal translations (e.g. “cut a covenant”) to call attention to Hebrew idioms, and towards simpler (even if less accurate) words (e.g. Ex. 12:7 “beam above the door” rather than “lintel”) to be easier to follow. If my readings provoke a discussion of the Hebrew, I consider that as justification for using less-than-idiomatic English. I try to find just the right balance between “literalness” and “listenable-ness”. A primary goal is throwing light on the Hebrew syntax.

In order to adapt the trope symbols to a left-to-right language like English, I *reversed* the direction of the trope symbols:

mercha tipcha munach tevir mapakh or yetiv kadma or pashta geresh gershayim telisha katana telisha gedola

(Generally speaking the *conjunctive tropes* such as mercha, munach, mapakh, kadma, and telisha katana “lean toward” the words they “conjoin” to, while the *disjunctive tropes* such as tipcha, geresh, gershayim, and telisha gedola “lean away” from the words that follow, so as to create a sense of separation.)

The trope symbol is normally placed under the accented syllable, unless it is a *pre-positive* accent (telisha gedola, placed *at the beginning* of the word or phrase) or a *post-positive* one (telisha katana or pashta, placed at the *end* of the word or phrase).

The Hebrew text frequently puts a *makkeph* (which is like a hyphen) between words in order to treat them as a single word to be chanted. I use a different system for English: If an entire English phrase is to be chanted to a single trope melody, I place it between grey brackets, as in this phrase from the Book of Lamentations:

[clings to her skirts]

The *leyner* is invited to fit this phrase to the *Eicha* “rivi'i” melody in whatever way seems most natural.

As a variant of the “grey bracket” device, I indicate pairs of tropes by “wrapping them around” the phrase which have the combined melody:

mercha/tipcha	kadma/geresh ( <i>or</i> : azla, etc.)	mercha siluk
(Renew our days)	(She weeps bitterly).	(a fire-offering to God)

Again, the *leyner* should decide on the most natural way to fit the phrase to the combined trope melody.

I put words in gray which I consider essential but which don’t strictly match the Hebrew. I also “pad” some phrases with extra words in gray to fill out a musical phrase nicely. Different trope systems vary widely in the length of the musical phrase used, so the words in gray may or not be used depending on the *leyner*’s cantillation system. In particular, the tropes *telisha g’dola* (ר), *legarmeh*, *metigah-zakef*, and *pazer* vary widely in the musical phrases used for chanting. (And please indulge me in my whimsical treatments of *shalshelet*.)

“*Metigah-zakef*” is a special trope combination which can be recognized by a kadma and a zakef katon appearing on the same Hebrew word (again, a *makkeph* makes two words into one). (There are several examples in Genesis 18 & 19, beginning with 18:16). I indicate this by placing the corresponding English phrase in grey brackets:

[Take heed—take care for yourself]

In some trope systems (viz. cantor Moshe Haschel in “Navigating the Bible II”) this is given a distinctive melody—I add extra syllables to fill out the musical phrase (as in “take care” in this example). Haschel’s system also chants the trope *munach* as *legarmeh* more often than other systems do.

I don’t write a single word of translation without first hearing the melody of the phrase in my mind, following one of two trope systems: The one by Portnoy and Wolff (*The Art of Cantillation*) or the one by Joshua R. Jacobson (*Chanting the Hebrew Bible*).

I transcribe the name יהוה as YHWH (in small caps). I almost always chant this as *yud-hey-vav-hey*, which I have discovered fits marvelously into several of the trope melodies. But of course the *leyner* can choose to pronounce it as “*God*” or “*Adonai*”.

Warning on the Hebrew text: The text I use for the English trope system is from Aryeh Kaplan; the Hebrew text I display is from Wikisource. Occasionally (but rarely) a phrase will use different tropes in the two systems.

*The English translations I mostly use (besides several scholarly commentaries) are the following:*

Aryeh Kaplan, ‘The Living Torah’ (1981) (also my source for proper names & transliterations)  
Richard Elliott Friedman, ‘The Bible With Sources Revealed’ (2003)  
Everett Fox, ‘The Five Books of Moses’ (1997)  
The Stone Edition ‘Tanach’ (1996)  
JPS ‘Hebrew-English Tanach’, (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. 2000), *along with* Orlinsky, ‘Notes on the New Translation of the Torah’ (1969)  
Robert Alter, ‘The Five Books of Moses’ (2004)  
Commentaries in the ‘Anchor Bible’ series  
Rotherham, The Emphasized Bible (1902)  
The Jerusalem Bible (1966) (also my source for topic headings)  
The New King James Bible (1982)